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THE

WORK OF THE AMERICAN BOARD.

A THREE YEARS' REVIEW.

1886-89.

BY REV. JUDSON SMITH, D.D., FOREIGN SECRETARY.

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THE following report of the work of the American Board for the last three years has been prepared and is submitted in accordance with a usage, now well established, of bringing to the view of the Congregational churches of the land, assembled in National Council, the progress and present state of the various forms of Christian work sustained by these churches.

It seems not only proper but almost imperative to preface this record with a reference to the "World's Foreign Missionary Conference," in session at Exeter Hall, London, June 9–19, 1888, the most striking event in foreign missionary annals during the three years here reviewed, and one of the most notable Christian assemblies of all the centuries. Following similar gatherings in England, in 1860 and 1878, it far surpassed them both in breadth of representation and in the range and value of its discussions. One hundred and forty-one societies, in Great Britain and Ireland, the United States and Canada, France, Switzerland, Germany, Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Australia, and South Africa, one hundred and nineteen of them belonging to Great Britain and America, were represented by 1,500 delegates, including missionaries from nearly every part of Asia, Africa, America, and the Pacific Islands where Christian missions have been planted. No assembly so well entitled to the designation ecumenical has ever been gathered within the limits of Christendom.

The spirit of the meeting and the tone of the discussions were nobly catholic and Christian from first to last; and though every Protestant denomination in the world which has any part in foreign missionary work was represented, no sectarian note was struck, but the sense of unity and brotherhood was everywhere strong and controlling. The strength of the forces which are combined in this enterprise; the marvelous successes which have been already won; the signal blessing of God upon this work, in its inception and progress, in opening wide and effectual doors, in breaking down barriers, in raising up advocates and supporters; the marvelous conspiring of political and scientific and literary events to open its way and hasten its growth; the greatness and intricacy of the problems to be solved; the vastness of the field still to be occupied; the unmistakable and supreme call to this work which God lays upon the English-speaking people of the world, — these and similar facts were brought vividly to light, and a mighty impulse given to the deeper consecration and the more abundant commitment of universal Christendom to the speedy evangelization of the globe. The honorable place accorded to the American Board in this Conference, the frequent and hearty recognition of its work and the deference paid to its representatives, were not the least significant and agreeable features of the occasion.

THE MISSIONS OF THE BOARD.

The Board sustains twenty-two distinct missions in widely separated fields, of which ten have been organized within the last two decades, and twelve have a history covering from thirty to seventy-six years. Beginning with the mission in Spain and moving eastward, we reach in succession the mission in Austria, that in Bulgaria, three

in Asia Minor, two in India, one in Ceylon, four in the Chinese Empire, two in Japan, three in Africa, two in the Pacific Islands, and coming to the two in Mexico we complete the circuit of the world. The field thus occupied remains the same as when reported three years ago; but it would give a wrong impression if we did not add that, while the missions remain numerically the same, within each of these fields we see an ever-enlarging area and more numerous population reached by the evangelical agencies that are at work. Within these missions the Board occupies as stations for missionary residence ninety-three principal cities and strategic centres and more than a thousand other cities and villages in which the gospel is regularly preached or Christian schools are maintained. Making all due allowance for the presence of other missionary societies, and computing numbers according to conservative standards, the population in these several countries to whom under God the American Board must bring the gospel, if it is to come to them at all in our day, amounts to at least 130,000,000, or about twice the total population of the United States. These millions are in great part unevangelized in a sense unknown in this land; there is not to be found among them a church, or a school, or a page of the Scriptures, or a Christian life, which is not the direct fruit of our missionary labors. Paganism, pure and simple, or false faiths like Buddhism, Confucianism, Mohammedanism, or corrupt forms of Christianity, in addition to the natural skepticism and antagonism of the unregenerate soul, occupy the minds and deprave the lives of the people and offer a steadfast opposition to the message and faith we bring. There are great and very striking differences among the peoples whom we seek to evangelize. In Turkey, India, China, and Japan we deal with people civilized in higher or lower degrees, with settled forms of government, a literature of their own, holding a recognized place among the political powers of the world. In Africa and the Pacific Islands, missionaries must reduce languages to writing, create a literature, and initiate at one and the same time evangelizing and civilizing movements.

THE FORCE EMPLOYED.

To man this great enterprise, carried on in so many widespread regions, and employing so numerous agencies, the Board has now under commission a force of 506 missionaries and assistant missionaries, of whom 177 are ordained men, 15 other men are physicians or business agents, and 314 are wives of missionaries or single women engaged in teaching and evangelistic work. In coöperation with these is a native agency of 2,383 laborers, pastors, preachers, teachers, and helpers in other ways, who constitute a most important part of the service and the main reliance for the prosecution and direction of labor when the foreign force is withdrawn. Keeping steadily in view the great aim of all missionary work, to introduce the gospel and call out the native resources of the people at the earliest time to sustain it and still further spread it abroad, the foreign force must always be small compared with the native agency; and must grow relatively smaller from year to year while the native force is multiplied and comes into an increasing prominence of service and responsibility.

The number of new missionaries sent out by the Board for each of the three years covered by this report is as follows: In 1886–87, forty-four, nine ordained men, five other men, and thirty women; in 1887–88, twenty-nine, seven ordained men, one physician, and twenty-one women; in 1888–89, fifty-two, twelve ordained men, four physicians, and thirty-six women. The average, forty-one, is much above that for any three consecutive years during the last three decades, and exceeds the average for the last twenty-five years by sixteen. A greater number have gone out for the first time during the year just closed than in any single year since 1837. The grand movement toward the foreign field among the students in all our colleges and seminaries, which is almost precisely contemporaneous with the period under survey, by which above

3,000 young men and women in America have declared their readiness to go into the foreign field if God shall open the way, has already brought many scores into this service, a fair proportion of them under the Board, and there is most cheering promise from this source for the future. In the providence of God the wide opening of the unevangelized nations to the entrance of the gospel and the powerful summons God thus makes on the Christian nations speedily to conquer the world for Christ are wonderfully timed to this uprising of the youth in Christian lands to meet the call, and also to the amazing and unparalleled increase of wealth in the hands of the leading Christian peoples of the earth. America and England, which in God's providence sustain the heaviest responsibility in this work, are the very nations where wealth and educated youth multiply the fastest. The meaning of this is unmistakable.

During the past three years a discussion has arisen within the constituency of the Board relative to the qualifications, especially in point of Christian belief, appropriately to be required of candidates for missionary appointment; and at two successive annual meetings this question received extended consideration. The action taken, while not unanimous, seemed decisively to approve of the course of the Prudential Committee in declining to commission candidates whose views were not in harmony with the faith "commonly held by the churches supporting the missions under the care of the Board." Dissatisfaction with these decisions of the Board has existed in some quarters, and has expressed itself in practical forms, and is not yet wholly allayed; how far it extends, and what further expression it may seek, time alone can determine. It is to be hoped, in view of the rapidly growing demands and the unexampled opportunities of the foreign work, that complete harmony in sentiment and action will soon be realized.

THE RESOURCES AT COMMAND.

The receipts of the Board for the support of its extended operations show a cheering gain from year to year. This gain does not keep pace with the enlargement of the work, and the problem of providing for the urgent calls from the several mission fields becomes more and more difficult of solution year by year. The importance of self-supporting Christian work is well understood and heartily accepted by all the missionaries of the Board, and is urged by them upon the people among whom they labor with presistent faithfulness. The degree to which this result is reached varies with the ability of the people, the extent to which the spirit of the gospel is apprehended and accepted, and the length of time during which the field has been cultivated. In all fields that have been occupied for some time the proportion of the total expense involved in Christian work which is borne by the people themselves is steadily on the increase. The receipts of the Board during the past three years, outside the income of all investments and including the donations from the Woman's Boards, are thus presented in the Annual Reports submitted to the Board: for 1886–87, from donations, $366,958; from legacies, $98,419; in all, $465,377; for 1887–88, from donations, $394,568, from legacies, $146,352; in all, $540,920; for 1888–89, from donations, $395,045, from legacies, $153,654; in all, $548,699. The average for the three years — $385,524 donations, and $132,808 legacies, $518,332 in all — is in excess of the average for any other three consecutive years during the last three decades, exclusive of the years when the great Swett and Otis legacies were received; and the year just closed shows larger receipts from donations and from legacies than any previous year in the history of the Board. These facts are most encouraging, and are stated with sincere gratitude. But the receipts of the Board are still far from keeping pace with either the growing demands of the work or the far more rapidly increasing resources of our constituency. The great legacies have been expended gradually, according to a wise policy of the Board,

and have brought an incalculable blessing to the work, providing for the opening and support of new missions, and for the enlargement of most important educational and evangelistic work. But they are rapidly disappearing; and the need of enlarged receipts from regular sources, in order to provide for the work thus temporarily sustained as well as to keep pace with the natural growth of our work, is already urgent and must grow more urgent every year. The extent of the opportunity which lies open to the Board in all fields where it now labors is practically boundless. The reason why we have only ninety men and women at work in China, instead of the hundreds that could instantly be set to work, is because the resources of the Board are not sufficient. The same might be said of almost any other field we occupy. We do not need to look for fresh fields; those we have already entered call for men and means far beyond our present ability to provide. Definite requests from our several missions are in the hands of the officers of the Board calling for sixty families and sixty single women the current year, all of which are reasonable in view of work already in hand. And the men and women are ready to go, are already offering themselves in unprecedented numbers for this very work. The main reason why these calls are not answered, and these boundless spiritual harvests reaped, is the want of sufficient means. The income of the Board needs to be enlarged by $250,000 annually, fairly to meet the emergency that is already upon us in Turkey, in India, in China, in Japan, in Africa, in all our fields. And the money is in Christian hands in abundance to meet this call at once and to make an equal addition five years hence. It is a responsibility such as few generations have had to face, to look out over the great continents with their 1,000,000,000 unevangelized souls all open to the gospel, all waiting for the gospel, and to know that it is in our power, if we wish to do it, to bring them the gospel before the century ends.

THE EXPANSION OF THE WORK.

The enlargement of the work of the Board appears in many facts, only a few of which can be distinctly measured and brought forward in definite statements. It appears in the heightened personal character of the native converts; in the growing amount and value of the part they are bearing in Christian labors; in the increasing demand for the Scriptures and for Christian literature; in the better manners, nobler sentiments, and manlier bearing of those who have come within the uplifting influence of the gospel. It appears also in the line of political, industrial, and intellectual life, giving promise of better homes and freer governments and abler men in time to come. All these things are significant of the radical and sweeping change that comes over the soul and the people that are redeemed by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

There are, however, other aspects of the work which can be presented more adequately in statistics, to some of which we call attention. The number of churches within the limits of the missions of the Board have increased, during these three years, from 310 to 358, and the communicants from 26,126 to 33,099. During the last year 22 new churches have been organized, and 4,529 have been received to the churches on confession of faith. The work in Sunday-schools is steadily enlarging and its influence is most helpful. Statistics of these schools have not yet been carefully reported from all the missions; but it is quite within the truth to say that 38,000 pupils old and young are regularly gathered for Sunday-school instruction among the missions of the Board. This form of Christian work is peculiarly adapted to the mission field, and the benefits of the systematic study of the Word of God are becoming increasingly manifest. This agency is proving an admirable means of reaching new centres and drawing fresh populations within the hearing and influence of the gospel. Young Men's Christian Associations are organized and working with

efficiency in Turkey, China, Japan, and Africa, and Young People's Societies of Christian Endeavor are proving their adaptation to every field and people where the Church is found. The native pastorate is well established in nearly all the older missions of the Board, and now numbers 174 against 151 three years ago. The principle of systematic giving is introduced into many of these churches, with encouraging results. The native contributions for all purposes connected with our missions last year amounted to $84,076. If the sums put into buildings for schools and churches could be ascertained, it would show a still more encouraging rate of giving on the part of these native Christians.

Perhaps in no one respect does the advance in the work of the Board register itself more emphatically or with nobler promise than in the schools of the missions. These schools now include 14 theological seminaries, 66 colleges and high schools for boys, 53 girls' boarding schools, besides 932 day schools. In the higher schools are reported 4,541 young men and 3,212 young women, 7,753 in all, against 2,352 young men and 1,958 young women, or 4,310 in all, three years ago, a gain of more than 75 per cent. The significance of this remarkable gain is more evident when we add that nowhere are hopeful conversions so numerous as among the pupils in these schools, the great majority who leave the higher schools being converted during their studies there. These students are the picked youths of both sexes, from whom the native ministry and the force of native teachers are drawn. Influences go out from these schools over and above all that can be tabulated, changing insensibly the thoughts and sentiments and aims of multitudes of homes and even of whole villages and towns. In the college at Kyōto, out of some 700 pupils in attendance last year nearly 200 have been received to the church. A similar record has been made in Anatolia College, at Marsovan, in Central Turkey College, Aintab, in Euphrates College, at Harpoot, and in the high schools and boarding schools on every field. The importance of the common schools as an evangelizing agency will be seen at once when it is observed that native Christian teachers are employed in them who give a positive Christian character to all their instruction, and that these schools are often preaching places as well, centres whence the light of the gospel penetrates far into the interior of native life and thought. These are often the growing points of the work, by means of which new fields are entered and the work extended. They cannot be too carefully guarded or too rapidly multiplied. It is interesting to note that in the colleges and theological seminaries native teachers of ability in increasing numbers are taking their place by the side of the foreign teachers, and the way is thus naturally preparing for the native forces to assume the entire support and direction of these institutions.

WOMAN'S WORK.

The part borne by the Christian women of our land in this great evangelizing work steadily increases, to the great advantage of the work in every respect. The Woman's Boards of Boston and Chicago, organized more than twenty years ago for the more effective prosecuting of work in behalf of women in foreign lands, and the Woman's Board of the Pacific, of more recent origin, gather an increasing volume of funds and wield an increasing weight of influence in behalf of Christian missions. While the number of ordained men in the field remains almost stationary, the numbers of single women rise from year to year, and are reported as 138 this year, against 126 last year, and 101 three years ago. The value of this arm of the service, wielded in perfect harmony with all the rest, but greatly widening its reach, it would be hard to overstate. In addition to the varied and invaluable service rendered by those who preside over missionary homes, which has been an indispensable part of the missionary work from the first, these young women are in charge of the girls' boarding schools, and much of

the evangelistic work in behalf of women. They are thus reaching the homes of the lands where they labor, bringing to them the light and hope and sweetness and comfort of the gospel which they teach and embody, and raising up a noble company of young women to become centres of Christian life and refinement in hundreds of villages and towns all over the unevangelized world. A few, as physicians, in China and India, add the ministry of medical service to the other attractions of the gospel and win great numbers to faith and the Christian life. There is no more important or hopeful feature of our work than this which women sustain and administer; it touches society at its centre, and enters thousands of homes, and plants the gospel thus at the very fountain-head of national life.

The scene which rises to view, as we take a broad survey of the work which this venerable parent of all the foreign missionary organizations of this land has in charge, is one well calculated to sober and inspire the mind. The vast extent and thronging populations of the fields it seeks to fill with the life and institutions of the gospel; the greatness of the interests involved in its work — both the salvation of so many million souls and the uplifting and civilizing of such great nations; the absolute unselfishness and sublime Christian beneficence of its aim; the divine message it bears abroad and the glorious fruits that follow its proclamation; the gradual yielding of darkness and superstition, the gradual dawn of the true light in so many hearts and homes and cities and peoples of the earth, where unbelief and gloom and despair once reigned supreme and alone, — these features at once arrest attention and challenge admiration. There is no fairer spectacle beneath the sun, there is no nobler work on which to expend life and strength and means; its successful achievement is the unmixed and unmeasured blessing of the race, the goal of history, sacred and profane, the coming of the kingdom of God in all the earth!